

# SELF-ADVOCACY

Being trans and/or transitioning means different things to different people. We are aware that experiences vary widely by location, years of experience, subject, grade level, etc. Please seek out support from those close to you who might be able to help, or others in the Trans Educators Network, if you are seeking specific help not addressed by this tip sheet.

1. **Know that you do not have to do anything alone.** Remember that your workplace safety and employment security is largely the responsibility of your employer. It is frustrating and unfair that trans people often have to engage in so much self-advocacy, but know that there are channels for support, especially at the national and state level.
2. **Learn about legal protections in your state/town/city/district.** Employment anti-discrimination policies vary widely from state to state, and even amongst cities within the same state, so try to find out whether your district has protections for gender identity and/or expression.
3. **Assess your needs and priorities.** Consider whether and where you want to change your name, gender marker, or anything else in your employment and insurance company records.
4. **Contact your district's human resources (HR) department.** They may be able to help you come up with a plan for transitioning in the workplace with coworkers, administrators, students, and parents.
5. **Consider seeking legal or union support.** While legal support may require a cost not anticipated on your part, there are organizations that may be able to provide services to you for free. Many are listed on our website. National teacher organizations or local unions may also be able to advocate for you.
6. **Determine what your interests and limits are around educating others.** Depending on your area, administrators, union representatives, or HR personnel may not understand trans identity, or the specifics of your needs. It can be useful to refer them to websites and reading materials for reference, or you may prefer/need to provide more direct or specific education. Before engaging with HR or administrators, it can be helpful to decide what you are and are not willing to share directly.
7. **Identify sources of social support.** Find other TEN group members in your area. Other members may have gone through similar experiences and might provide valuable information relevant to your particular district. Identify and lean on a "pod" of trusted community members and allies to support you in assessing risks and benefits as you navigate professional decision-making.
8. **Organize!** Once you have identified people who can provide support your efforts, consider organizing for trans-competent employment practices & benefits within your district.
9. **Take care of yourself.** Find things that make you happy. You have a challenging and important job working in education. Make sure to take time to do things or be with people who rejuvenate you.

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